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ABSTRACT

The study of the Ramah Navajos is a study of a growing sense of community, within a historical perspective. The Navajos in Ramah had never constituted a unified and tightly knit community until 1950. Since that time much has taken place among the Navajos in Ramah which has served to give new meaning and purpose to their life together. The trend of this growing sense of community and political unity provides a natural framework for the analysis of Ramah history. In this survey of The People's experience in the Ramah area, consideration is given to the general nature of the geographical region, its Navajo residents, and their way of life. The history of the Ramahs is treated in 4 phases: (1) settlement and stabilization (circa 1869-1919), (2) land allotment (1920-39), (3) definition--political awareness (1940-69), and (4) a new sense of community (1970-?). (FF)

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NO. 1

THE RAMAH NAVAJOS
A Growing Sense of Community
In Historical Perspective

By

Kendall Blanchard

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THE RAMAH NAVAJOS:
A Growing Sense of Community
In Historical Perspecitve

Navajos who live in the Ramah area of New Mexico have begun, in the past few decades, to escape certain restraints of traditional social and kinship patterns in their personal relations and establish broader community ties. As one Ramah Navajo recently put it:

> A long time ago I could just get on my horse and ride for several days and everywhere I go I see my people, my relatives, and I am welcome in their house. Other Navajos, not my relatives, I did not know so well, even those who live close to me, and I did not do many things with them....Now Navajos try to be better friends to each other, and we don't worry so much about how it is that we're related.... We just try to work together.

As late as 1950 one anthropologist concluded that "The Ramah Navajo have never constituted a unified and tightly knit community."[1/] However, since that time many things have taken place among The People in Ramah which have served to give new meaning and purpose to their life together. The trend of this growing sense of community and political unity provides a natural framework for the analysis of Ramah Navajo history.

In this survey of The People's experience in the Ramah area, I am considering the general nature of the geographical region, its Navajo residents and their way of life, and treating the history of the group in terms of four phases:

1) Settlement and Stabilization (circa 1869-1919)
2) Allotment (1920-1939)
3) Definition (1940-1969)and
4) A New Sense of Community (1970-?).

Background

The town of Ramah itself, which the Navajos refer to as Tl'ohchini ("Onions"), is a small village of about 280 persons, located in McKinley County some forty-four miles south-southeast of Gallup, New Mexico.[2/] Founded in the 1880's by missionary-minded Mormons, the community over the years has been oriented around church activities, the majority of its citizens being Latter Day Saints. The village, predominantly White, lies in the northeast corner of a large stretch of land referred to as the "Ramah area." Adjacent to state highway 53 between Zuni and Grants, Ramah's business community encompasses a trading post, gas station, garage, post office, laundromat, and a small motel. The area itself extends some fourteen miles to the

east of Ramah and thirty-five miles south, comprising a total of 505 square miles, of which about fifty percent is Navajo-owned. In early 1971 there were approximately 1,250 Navajos living in the Ramah area.

Many anthropologists have studied and worked with the Navajos in Ramah. In fact, if it were possible to calculate the number of hours spent by anthropologists doing field work in the Ramah area in relation to either geographcial size or population, it could probably be demonstrated that the Ramah Indians are the most studied people in the world. A good percentage of the published material on the Navajo has come out of the Ramah region; so much so that in many cases, students with a limited book knowledge of the Navajos are actually only familiar with those from Ramah.

Anthropological interest in Ramah dates back to 1923 when Clyde Kluckhohn first began working in the area. [3/] Since then, the famous Ramah Project (1940-1947) and the Harvard Values Project (1949-1955), in addition to other less significant studies and field excursions, have brought many scholars and students from a broad variety of academic disciplines besides anthropology--from history and

sociology to psychology and botany. One local Navajo who began working with Kluckhohn as an interpreter back in the thirties has hosted so many field workers that he and his family once built a special hogan "for the anthropologists."

Natural Setting

The Ramah area is marked by elevations ranging from 6,400 to 8,000 feet. Because of the altitude and the related steppe climate, temperatures tend to vary widely. For example, during the month of January in 1971 the temperature dropped to as low as minus fifty degrees and rose to as high as sixty-two degrees above zero, all within a two-day period. While killing frosts often occur in every month except July and August, temperatures average around twenty-five in January and sixty-six in July. Precipitation brings about fifteen inches of moisture to Ramah annually, including occasional heavy snows. The most severe snowfall recorded in Ramah history occurred in November, 1931, when thirty inches fell within two days, resulting in death for many and the loss of livestock for others. The storm had a crippling effect on the economic potential of Anglos and

Navajos alike, its results felt for three or four years following the experience. Many local residents have never forgotten the tragedy.

The geographical environment of the Ramah area has been most adequately described by Landgraf.[4/] Characterized as semi-arid, most of the central and southeast portions of the region are covered by old lava beds and basaltic outcrops. Other sections are marked by colored sandstone, while numerous mesas and small canyons intermittently line the rugged face of the whole area. The countryside is drained by the Zuni River which flows southwest and empties into the Little Colorado.

The soil of the area belongs to the lithosol group, soils which are "...very complex, normally shallow, and subject to rapid erosion."[5/] This helps to explain much of the eroded land and the many large arroyos, although in the case of the latter, overgrazing, cultivation, and road construction must also bear part of the blame.

Vegetation in the Ramah area falls into two broad categories relative to altitude. The higher elevations are marked by a landscape of coniferous trees -- mainly

yellow pine -- with short grasses. The lower region, the juniper-pinyon zone, is characterized by pinyon pine, one-seed juniper, Rocky Mountain juniper, and short grasses with many shrubs: sage brush, mountain mahogany, and Apache plume. In some of the valleys one finds Douglas fir and Engelmann spruce, while along the waterways are occasional cottonwood and willow trees.

The most common animal wildlife in the area are the rabbits, both jack and cottontail. While they have long been hunted by Whites and Navajos alike for either sport or food, they continue to flourish. One local resident tells of an evening a few years ago when he and two friends went "spot-lighting" and shot seventy-nine of the samll animals in less than four hours. When Landgraf reported his findings relative to the situation around 1940, he noted that the prairie dog population had fallen off due to hunting by the Navajos and federal rodent control measures.[6/] However, recently more and more colonies of these small mammals have been springing up and are continuing to menace Navajo farmers in the area.

Other animals in the region include squirrel, field

mice, rats, gophers, coyotes, foxes, and more recently, a great host of skunks. Hunters shot quite a few deer in the country around Ramah in 1970, and while bobcats and mountain lions were reported that year, no one has seen black bears, wolves, or mountain sheep since around 1960.

The predominant reptile in the area is the horned toad, although many rattlesnakes were seen and killed during 1970. The pinyon jay dominates the bird population. Also common are the spurred towhees, swallows, swifts, and sparrows. Occasionally, owls, woodpeckers, and blackbirds have been observed. During the few years previous to 1971 an increasing number of crows had been flourishing. Game birds, such as quail and grouse, were once more frequently encountered than they have been in recent periods, and due to 1970's low water level, very few ducks ventured into the Ramah area during the winter months.

History

Pre-Fort Sumner (? - 1864)

The unresolved question regarding the history of the Navajos in the Ramah area is whether or not there were many

of The People settled there prior to the Navajos' return from Fort Sumner captivity in 1868, or during the years immediately following. To date, most evidence suggests that there were.

Worcester has suggested that it was a group of Navajos who helped the Zunis defend themselves against Coronado in 1540.[7/] If this was the case, it is quite likely that the Navajos were familiar with the Ramah area some twenty miles to the east. Additional support for this notion that the Navajos were in the general vicinity of Ramah as early as the sixteenth century is contained in the journal of the Spanish explorer Antonio de Espejo.[8/] During his expedition into New Mexico (1582-1583) he and his party encountered the Querechos or Corechos, generally conceded to have been Navajos, near the province of Acoma, slightly northeast of the Ramah area.

Tree-ring dates from the area provide another type of evidence lending credibility to the pre-Fort Sumner Ramah Navajo idea. By analyzing the concentric rings in cross-sections of hewn, yet preserved, trees, archaeologists are able to determine with reasonable accuracy when particular

logs had been harvested. On the basis of this method, forty-nine timbers from hogans, sweathouses, and sheep corrals located on Navajo archaeological sites in the general vicinity of Ramah have been studied. These logs yielded dates ranging from 1543 to 1925, suggesting that Navajos were established in the area throughout the period -- from as early as the late 1500's until they were taken to Fort Sumner.

It appears that the territory occupied by the Navajos -- certainly by the early years of the eighteenth century -- extended into at least portions of the Ramah area. Kluckhohn quotes from a letter written by Governor Francisco Cuervo Valdez (Santa Fe, August 18, 1706) in which El Morro (located some twelve miles east of Ramah) is specifically named as lying within "...the extensive province of Navajo."[10/] Also, one of the earliest known maps of Navajo country (1778-1779) falls short by only a few miles of including the northern edges of the Ramah territory.[11/]

While there is a possibility that Indians in this area during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were actually Apache, the case for their being Navajo is much more substantial. Documentary evidence, such as the Spanish-Navajo

treaty of 1819 and the reports of travelers and military men, argues strongly in favor of the suggestion that there were Navajos in the Ramah area at least by the early 1800's. Older Navajos in the region have supported this by their claims that in the 1840's a group of them was driven out of the Crownpoint area to the north by warrior Utes, and were forced to take up residence across the Zuni Mountains to the south in the vicinity of Ramah. According to this report there were several Navajo families farming and hunting in the present Ramah Reservoir region during the pre-Fort Sumner period, up until 1864. Bidaga, one of the great leaders of the Ramah Navajo, once contended:

> I was born in Ramah before the Navajo went to Fort Sumner. The grand parents and great grand parents of the Navajos who live in Ramah now lived there long before going to Fort Sumner. The Navajos have lived in Ramah for six generations. My parents told me about the trip to Fort Sumner, for I was a little baby.
>
> My parents and the ancestors of the Ramah people were young folks when they came back from Ft. Sumner. They returned to the very place they left, the valley of Ramah.
>
> Because our parents and our grand parents were raised and died there, we feel about this land as though it were our mother and father. It is the only place for us to live. The place where

> my family and the other Navajo lived was near the head of the present Ramah Lake. There are still the remains of our old hogans around the lake. 12/

This and other similar claims are substantiated by personal history sheets from the Zuni Hospital Clinical records, birth and death certifications, and Indian scout pension records. These sources indicate that at least forty-one Navajos were born in the Ramah area during the period between 1838 and 1868. 13/

While the majority of the evidence suggests that the Navajos were permanently settled in the Ramah area before the Fort Sumner tragedy, the White residents of the village prefer to see the Indian presence in the region prior to this event as only sporadic and temporary. As one older member of the Mormon community has argued:

> The Navajos never settled permanently in the Ramah area prior to Fort Sumner. They made some extended trips into the area for hunting and raiding, but they didn't really settle down and herd sheep and grow corn, at least like they did in other areas, until later.

Despite Anglo protestations to the contrary, the idea that there was a pre-Fort Sumner Navajo band in the Ramah area appears to be a historical reality. Illustrating how convincing this argument has become in recent years, the

Indian Claims Commission in June, 1970, officially recognized Navajo aboriginal territory prior to 1868 as having included the Ramah area.[14/]

Phase I:
Settlement and Stabilization
(circa 1869 - 1919)

Regardless of how one resolves the question of a pre-Fort Sumner Ramah Navajo group, the history of today's community perhaps can be more adequately treated if the post-captivity period is employed as a base. Following their release from Fort Sumner in June of 1868, two Navajo family groups, or "outfits," as anthropologists have labeled them, resettled in the Ramah area. Though both groups have become identified by their respective male leaders, Old Man Cojo and Many Beads, in neither case were these family heads the eldest; local residents have chosen this means merely to identify the two outfits. Some dispute remains as to which group settled first, and as to whether they had lived there prior to Fort Sumner. The weight of the evidence places the Cojo family at Ramah first, and Bidaga's statement (at note 12 above) certainly substantiates residence there by his family (Many Beads was his father)

prior to Fort Sumner.[15] In any case, by the early 1870's there were approximately twenty-five Navajos living just to the north of the present site of Ramah.[16]

Cultural styles of these early residents, like those of their Tribesmen who returned to the reservation area itself, were rooted in traditional patterns. The oldest economic activity of significance to the Ramah Navajos was that of hunting and gathering. Various game animals, as deer and rabbits, were hunted and eaten; plants were collected for ritual, medicinal, and food purposes; and wood was gathered for fuel and dwelling construction. During these early years of Navajo experience in the Ramah area a few crops were also cultivated, in particular, corn, beans, and squash. They herded small flocks of sheep, and each family owned several horses which they used for both livlihood and pleasure. Sheep also were important as a source of meat and wool, the latter being used in weaving and in the manufacture of many important household items.

The Ramah Navajo family essentially was matrilineal and the post-marital pattern tended toward matrilocality, meaning that kinship was reckoned through the female

genealogy, and newly-married couples took up residence in the general area of the wife's family. Clan membership was a very important consideration, especially in marriage. In selecting a mate, a person avoided, in order of importance, members of his own clan, members of his linked clan group, members of his father's clan, members of his father's linked clan group, and any individual whose father was a member of his own father's clan. The most important clans among the Ramah Navajos in these early days were the Meadow (Haltsooi-dine'e), Bitter Water (Todich'ii'nii), and Alkaline Water (Todik'oonzhii) groups.

During this early period each household had a small area of land, or home plot, which contained several adjoining fields, one or more hogans -- usually "...made of logs laid in saddle-notched fashion to form a hexagonal or octagonal dome-shaped structure, surmounted by an open smoke hole and roofed and floored with earth..." -- a chaha'o (a temporary shade or shelter oonstructed of poles and branches), corral and small sweathouse.[17/]

The first few years of resettlement after 1869 brought the Navajos into direct contact with their old enemies, the

Spanish-Americans, several groups of whom moved into the area during this period. Despite basic distrust and misgivings on both sides of the encounter, sufficient space was available at this time to avoid large-scale land disputes.

> There was still plenty of open country, however, and the land-use customs of the newcomers were enough in accord with those of the Navahos to make the situation tolerable. Most of the Spanish-Americans remained in the Tinaja Flat locality to the northeast of Inscription Rock and the Navahos stayed to the north and west in the district where Ramah village was later built. 18/

From these Spanish-Americans the Navajos obtained sheep to increase their small herds, learned better methods of animal husbandry, and relations between the two groups tended to stabilize around a mutual respect. While interaction was limited, open hostilities actually were nonexistent.

In the late 1870's, Mormons began to move into the Ramah area, an event which marked the initiation of a long era of land disputes. Under pressures of persecution and expansion, the Latter Day Saints began to settle in various parts of northern Arizona and New Mexico with instructions to "convert the Lamanites" (the Book of Mormon name for

all North American Indians) and "tame the land." Despite their religious zeal and enthusiasm for the well-being of the Indians, in most confrontations between missionary and prospective convert, the latter came away the obvious loser, and the experience had a memorable impact on Navajo attitudes.

The first event drastically affecting Navajo land rights in the area occurred in 1866. That year Congress passed the Enabling Act under which the railroads were granted forty miles -- later extended to fifty -- of land on either side of its tracks in certain parts of the United States, including New Mexico. By this Act the best sections of land in the northern part of the Ramah area thus became privately-owned property. Matters were further complicated by the Treaty of June 1, 1868, negotiated between the Government and the Navajos at Fort Sumner, which made it mandatory for all Navajos to live within the boundaries of the reservation established by that treaty. Any who took up residence on public or private land beyond reservation confines forfeited all rights and privileges conferred by the treaty. In reality, the Ramah Navajos were therefore left with no legal property rights, and most cases were treated

simply as squatters. White settlers coming into Ramah or other areas bordering the newly-created reservation could thus lay claim to lands occupied by Navajos.

When Mormons first moved into the Ramah area, they made it known that they came in search of land and, ignoring claims of Navajos living in the region, the Saints settled on the choice sections near the spring north of present-day Ramah. As one Navajo related the incident:

> They said that they had come here in quest of land. As they told about themselves, these Mormons said that they had come from the place called Big Sheep /La Plata Mountain/. It was the Mexicans who sent these land-hunting Mormons upon us. 'Right over here is a spring that flows from the mountain, and the land there lies unoccupied,' the Mexicans told them. But that was our land there. The Mexicans led them over to what was our land. 19/

During the 1880's lands were surveyed for homesteading. Efforts were made to set up boundaries and establish property claims in areas of New Mexico of which Ramah is a part. The railroad, as well as other private and public interests, soon had their land holdings well-defined. The whole procedure was very confusing and frustrating to the Ramah Navajos, and as homesteaders filed for the more desirable plots, the Indians were forced onto the

unproductive sections in the barren regions southeast of Ramah. Bidaga recalled:

> ...after a number of years, boundaries were established on the land. At the time when these boundaries were set up we camped up in the mountain above Onions. We did not hear of this matter until they were already in the process of putting up the boundaries....We were told about it over and over. Despite this fact, some of us were still not clear about what was meant. We did not even know where the boundaries lay. It was that way with us for a long time. 20/

Because of this misunderstanding, coupled with the fact that existing laws left non-reservation Indians with few rights and little bargaining leverage in land disputes, the Mormon tactics appeared ruthless and unjust to the Navajos. As the Saints obtained legal rights to the more fertile lands near the spring, the Navajos were further pressured into collecting their belongings and moving.

> They discouraged our use of the spring that ran out at the place called Onions. Another reason for which the Mormons pushed us out southward was that some of the Navahos were annoying their livestock. They pushed us up on top of the plateau... The result was that we were forced far away from the water upon which we depended for our families. We were driven out to where there were only ponds and puddles, over toward Long Mountain /Cerro Alto/.21/

These early contacts between Navajos and Mormons were unfortunate for the former, and in many cases a certain bitterness has persisted to this day. The early reaction of the Navajos has been summed up by a member of the Ramah Indian community:

> When the Mormons first came in, they said we and they could all live together in this valley. They were just like a cat who doesn't show its claws. 22/

It was not until the 1920's, when the Ramah Navajos began to take advantage of opportunities afforded by the Allotment Act of 1887, that they obtained legally defensible rights to lands they were occupying. On the other hand, because of the inferior quality of the sections eventually settled by the dispossessed Navajos, these lands were not coveted by their non-Indian neighbors, and during the latter years of this first phase, there were only a few land disputes between Anglos and Navajos.

Despite land problems and forced resettlement, after 1875 the Navajo population around Ramah increased rapidly. By 1890, as a result of immigration and an impressive birth rate, there were eleven families totaling some seventy individuals comprising the Ramah Navajo community. 23/

Perhaps the most well-known early Navajo settler in the Ramah area was Many Beads. Informally recognized as leader of the Ramah Navajos for many years, Many Beads' background was that of a courageous warrior. He was a very dynamic, forceful individual, and often referred to himself as "Number One." According to local tradition, he once attempted to take a Ramah Mormon woman for his third wife. Despite his gallantry and persistance, the effort eventually failed. Many Beads, also remembered by the Whites as a great leader, was also the first important Mormon convert among the Ramah Navajos. As one Mormon recalled:

> He /Many Beads/ used to get the people together at the chicken pulls and tell them to stay away from whiskey and look after their stock. He would hold up his arms /gesture of embracing/and say 'Hold on to it like that.' They really minded him. 24/

Two other prominent Navajos, both of whom settled in the Ramah area during the latter part of the nineteenth century, were Jake Carisozo and Salao Leon. These two men enlisted as scouts for the U. S. Army, and served during the eampaigns of 1880 against Geronimo and the Apaches. Salao, born in the area of the San Juan River, had lived with the Utes for several years as a boy. After his father was

killed by Mexicans, he moved to the Zuni area. Following his release from Fort Sumner in 1868, he took an Apache wife, and several years afterwards moved into the Ramah area.

In many ways, Jake Carisozo was even more colorful than Salao. Like the latter, he had lived a rather mobile life, married an Apache woman, and settled in the Ramah area in the 1880's. Because of an injury suffered in the Apache wars, Jake lost the use of his right arm. For this reason, he was known by other members of the community as Crippled Arm. Despite this infirmity, and later his blindness, Jake was surprisingly active up until the time of his death in 1942.

One of the wealthiest Navajos in the history of the Ramah area, Old Man Antonio, moved into the region during the late 1880's. According to local sources, just prior to the stock reduction program of the 1930's, Antonio has a herd of over 7,000 sheep. He was killed in a tragic car accident in 1960.

Bidaga, son of Many Beads, is recognized by many as the most outstanding Navajo in Ramah history. So named because of his red moustache, Bidaga was a prominent ceremonial

practitioner, a noted thinker, and astute politician. Less colorful and dynamic than his father, Bidaga established his reputation by working incessantly for the well-being of the Ramah Navajos until the time of his death in 1956.

Another prominent Navajo who settled in the Ramah area during the latter years of this first phase of local history was Frank Eriacho. An intriguing legend has it that Frank's father, Jesus Eriacho, was a full-blooded Castilian Spaniard who became a leader among the Zunis during the mid-nineteeth century.

According to the story, Jesus was born around 1810 to Spanish parents somewhere in Sonora, Mexico. As a young man he was captured, along with a friend, by Apaches, who took them north into the area that is now southern Arizona. There he and his companion were held as slaves by the Apaches until Jesus managed to befriend a young Indian girl who helpd them escape. His friend chose to head southward, but Jesus went north, intrigued by the stories he had heard of a peace-loving tribe of Indians, the Zuni.

After several days of hard riding, he arrived at Zuni and, according to the legend, was taken in by the Zuni

leader and his wife who had no children of their own. Thus recognized as the son of the chief of the tribe, the young Jesus held a prominent place in the community, but because he helped his foster-mother with some of the heavier womanly chores, as hauling water from the wells, he was ridiculed by the other boys of the tribe. He retaliated with a show of violence that stunned the otherwise passive Zunis. Following this up with a gallant defense of his actions before the elders, he soon won the confidence and respect of the Indians. Supposedly, he introduced into the community several new tools and time-saving practices, such as the shoulder yoke. He also impressed the Zunis with his practical wisdom and ability.

After his foster-father died some years later, Jesus, now perhaps in his twenties, was made "a chief of the tribe." He organized the people into battalions and taught them to fight and protect themselves against the raiding onslaughts of the Navajos. The fruits of the latter effort were realized around 1840 when the Navajos made their last large-scale raid on the Zunis. Retreating to a mountain stronghold, the Zunis put up a surprisingly effective resistance

to the Navajo invaders, and their efforts discouraged further Navajo attacks.

Later in his life, Jesus took several wives, one whom was a Navajo from Ramah, the daughter of Salao. His one son from this marriage, Frank, chose to leave Zuni and moved into the Ramah area where he married one of the daughters of Old Man Antonio. Inheriting through his wife a large holding of land and sheep, Frank soon established a reputation as a very shrewd and adept rancher and business man.

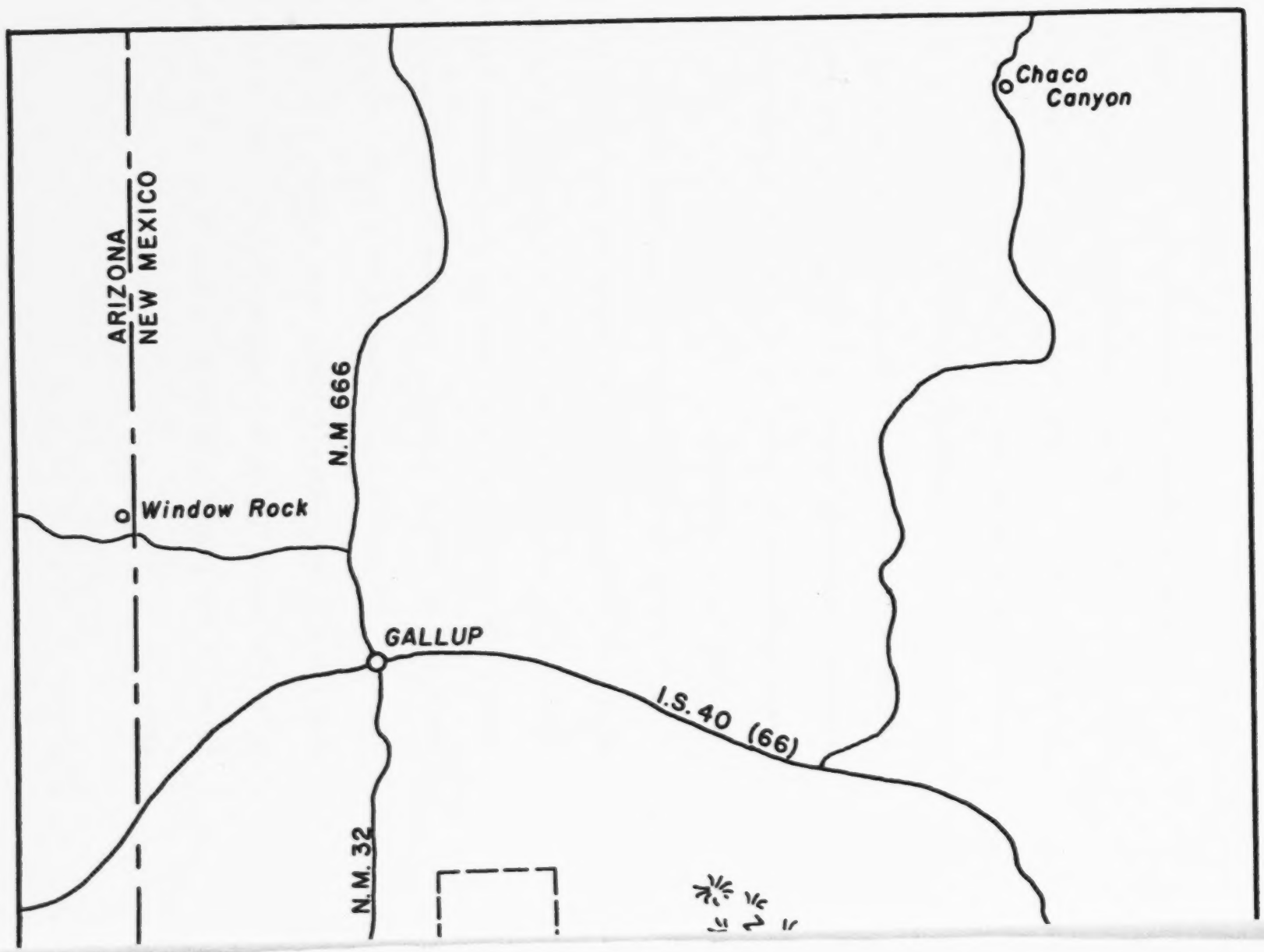
Besides Old Man Cojo and Many Beads noted above, other prominent Navajos who settled early in the Ramah area, included No Hat, Big, Red Eye, Jose Naton, Loin Cloth, and Tall Loin Cloth. Generally, most Ramah Navajos today point to one or more of these men as their direct ancestors, who rightfully deserve the title, "Founding Fathers."

After 1890, no new families joined the Ramah Navajo population. All immigration since that time has been a direct result of marriage between the Ramah and Eastern or other Navajo groups. Generally this was balanced by emigration stemming from the normal reciprocity of marriage

arrangements.

This first phase of Navajo history in the Ramah area was characterized by settlement, initial contacts with Mormon Anglos, land disputes, resettlement, and a general attitude of frustration and defeat. While the Navajos faced many problems in their attempt to wrest a living from the stingy environment (e.g., water shortage, crop failure, insects, disease), these were secondary to the continuing loses sustained as a result of their many encounters with the exploiting Mormons.

In terms of understanding themselves as a unique group, during this early period the Ramah Navajos were little concerned with matters beyond their own immediate household needs. Occasionally larger groups got together for ceremonial or economic reasons, but community activities were limited. To provide sufficient food for their families was a major problem. As a result, very little, if any, sense of political unity transcending traditional kinship ties existed in the everyday affairs of the Navajos in the Ramah area.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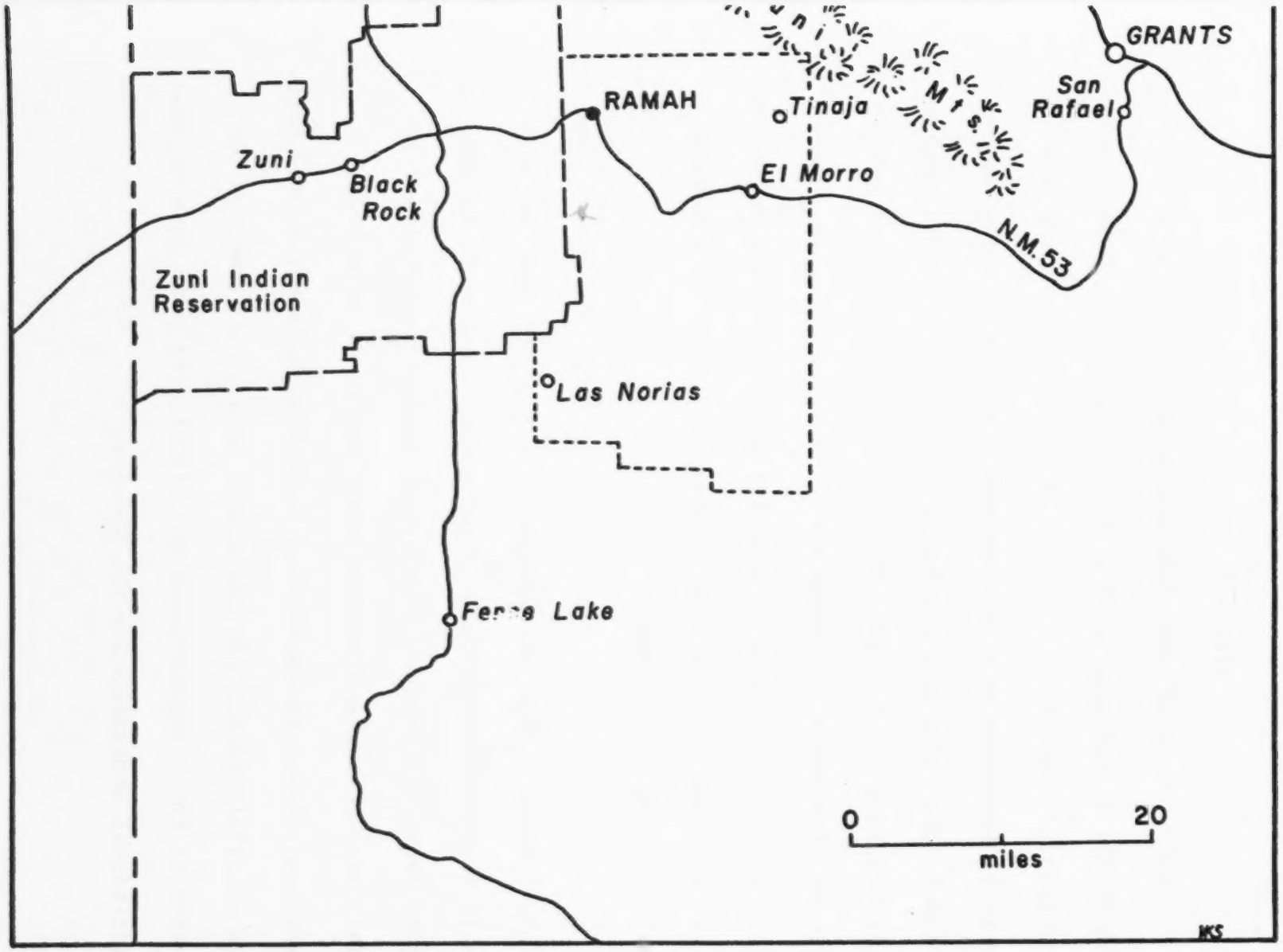

Figure 11. RAMAH: THE GENERAL VICINITY

Phase 2:
Allotment (1920 - 1939)

In February of 1887 Congress passed the Allotment Act. Under the provisions of this Act an individual Indian could receive a "trust patent" to certain acreages of land sepecifically designated for this purpose. Each qualifying individual could obtain a maximum of 160 acres of non-irrigable, grazing land. Trust patents were designed to expire after twenty-five years, at which time the allottee could receive full title to the land, unless the president chose to extend the trust period. To date, patents have been extended annually by Executive Order.

Prior to 1920 only one Navajo in Ramah had applied for an allotment. However, between 1920 and 1940 most of the male heads of households had applied for and received 160-acre plots. Although the Alloting Agents were sent out to help the Indians and protect their rights in land transactions, their allotments were interspersed between privately-owned, state lands, and the public domain, a situation that resulted in a "checkerboarding" effect, which in turn created additional confusion for the Navajos.

In 1929 the Navajo Tribe purchased eithteen sections of land just south of Ramah for the specific use of local Navajos. A few years later Navajos were leasing state lands for grazing purposes, but as far as actual ownership and control, the tribal-purchase lands and the individual allotments obtained during this period, with some few exceptions, finalized Navajo land acquisition in the Ramah area.

About 1924 the Bureau of Indian Affairs instituted a Chapter System under which Navajo communities elected a local president, vice-president, and secretary, and regularly-scheduled Chapter meetings were to be held. The Ramah Chapter was organized accordingly. Previous to this, local leadership had been primarily of an informal nature. Local informants claim that in the final decade of the last century one of the Anglo traders at Ramah had convinced the Navajos of their need for a leader. Following this suggestion, supposedly, several of the Indians congregated and chose one of their elders, Many Beads, as the "Head Man." While the role was never clearly defined, the weight of the office and the influence of Many Beads' family tended to monopolize the position, persisting over the

years and giving some direction to local activities. So strong was tradition along this line, that not until the mid-forties did the formally-elected Chapter officers wield sufficient influence to prevail over that of the informally-recognized head man.

In 1927 the Ramah Navajos were placed under the jurisdiction of the newly-established Eastern Navajo Agency at Crownpoint, New Mexico. Prior to this, they had been largely ignored by both the tribe and the government's Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Perhaps as a result of such an ill-defined jurisdiction, until this phase

> ...the picture seems to have been that of leaving the Ramah Navajo severely alone except for rare incidents when Anglos or Spanish-Americans demanded intervention on land matters or disturbances of law and order. 25/

Even after the agency was established, officials visited Ramah only infrequently and, because of the distance and traveling difficulties, Navajos from there rarely made the trip to Crownpoint. When they did, it was usually to seek assistance in resolving land encroachment problems. The Navajos of Ramah continued to feel neglected.

Nonetheless, in 1928, when the first official Navajo Tribal census was taken, the Ramah residents were included. During the next two years they also were assigned offical census numbers, and the ground-work was laid for a more meaningful participation in tribal life.

The early 1930's were difficult years for the Ramah Navajos. The disastrous snowfall of 1931 brought death and starvation in its wake. Deflated prices caused by the national depression lowered local produce income. New Anglo settlers from Texas arrived and in the process of establishing themselves, brought new pressures against the Navajos and their land holdings.

In the midst of their problems, however, the Ramah Navajos were greeted by new and expanded government assistance. Additional land was leased specifically for their use. Dams, wells, and roads were constructed. A "Ramah Community Area" was organized under the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934, and under this Act, no fees were to be charged on grazing permits for public domain property in specific districts. The primary effect of all these activities was to give the federal government direct control over Indian

and public land in the region. However, at the same time it did curtail the use of these lands by non-Indians.

Despite the magnitude of these projects and the expressed good intentions behind them, the Navajos' reaction was not one of open receptivity and gratefulness. There were some obvious and expected objections.

> With all of this assistance...came such concepts as 'conservation,' 'erosion,' 'stock reduction,' 'land management,' that went against every grain of Navajo perception and attitude....The concepts violated fundamental assumptions to such an extent that they were held as further Anglo threats. Sheep were held back from dipping counts, and herds were switched around to confuse census-takers. The 'reduction' became a primary and perennial theme of fear and complaint. 26/

Navajo stock reductions of the thirties were enforced by the government to correlate the number of animals with the actual carrying capacity of the land and thus limit the evident damaging effects of over-grazing on Navajo forage acreages. Range specialists were employed to calculate the carrying capacity of each district, and limits were set in numbers of "sheep units year long" (SUYL). Grazing Permits were then issued, based on the carrying capacity of the district and the amount of land held by an individual. One

sheep unit was equivalent to one goat, one-fifth horse, and one-fourth cow, and, dependent on the number of SUYL's stipulated in his permit, a permittee could proportion his livestock in any way he so desired, so long as the total units did not exceed the limit permitted. Each fall, if his herd had increased beyond the allotted quota, the owner was required to reduce his stock by selling enough animals to regain permit levels.

Bitterness followed the enforced reductions and, although this feeling has in some cases persisted among the Navajos, there are those in the Ramah group who admit that it had been necessary. One of the older stockmen in the area recalls:

> I had 1,600 sheep, but they knocked it down to 320. That's all they allotted me; and three horses, a team and a saddle horse. Some people, they fight with them, that John Collier /Commissioner of Indian Affairs at that time/; they fight with them at Window Rock. But I think it was right. We had been over-grazing.

The stock reduction program, along with other mandatory government designs, served a positive function in helping to convince the Ramah Navajos that, in many respects, "Washington was on their side." This awareness led to a

new confidence, and Navajos in the Ramah community became more aggressive in their relations with Whites. They resolved to no longer simply stand by and allow themselves to be pushed around; henceforth they would face squarely the pressures exerted by Anglo exploitation.

This second phase of Ramah Navajo history saw the establishment of family groups on allotted lands, offical recongnition of the Ramah Chapter by tribal authorities, greater government assistance and intervention, and the birth of a new sense of determination and community awareness. Because of increased interaction with forces outside the area, such as the tribe and the federal government, the Ramah Navajos began to see themselves as a unique and distinctive group.

Phase 3:
Definition (1940 - 1969)

Technically, this phase was initiated in the fall of 1939 with the election of a delegate from Ramah to represent the Ramah Navajo Community in the newly-reorganized Navajo Tribal Council. Although this new involvement in tribal affairs eventually led to a new sense of political purpose

among the Ramah group, early participation on the Council was a disappointment to local representatives. The first councilman is reported to have concluded after serving several years:

> It's no use to go over there. The discussions all center about the people living there on the reservation. The councilmen at Window Rock never give a moment's consideration to a single matter with regard to us Navahos who live outside the reservation. 27/

In 1942 feelings of unhappiness and neglect generated by the tenuous relationship that persisted between the Crownpoint Agency and the Ramah Navajos prompted the latter to petition for transfer of their jurisdiction to the United Pueblos Agency in Albuquerque and the Sub-Agency in Blackrock, near Zuni. The transfer was effected, and the close proximity of the sub-agency led to new benefits, improved services, and better relations with the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

The year 1945 witnessed an event which was to have a significant impact on the lives of The People in Ramah. In that year Nazarene missionaries came into the area. Although the Mormons had been working with the Navajos since

the early 1880's, they never had operated a very effective or sustained program. In response to the fresh enthusiasm of the new missionary effort, the Saints revitalized their program. As a result, many Ramah Navajos were directly influenced by these proselytizing attempts of the Christian churches.

Although church affiliation tended to follow kinship lines -- some families allied with the Mormons, others with the Nazarenes, while others clung to the tenets of traditional Navajo religious thought -- a number of factions developed among the Ramah Navajos which initially were grounded in ideological differences. In many cases, disagreements that originated in response to religious issues evolved into political contentions, and in the end served to bring more of the local Navajos into the arena of broader group discourse and involvement. Ideological debate also served to give some direction to the development of a growing community self-consciousness by defining the issues in more comprehensible language.

In 1952 the Mormon village of Ramah constructed new high school facilities, and the following summer the Bureau

of Indian Affairs began construction of dormitory buildings in the northeast section of town on land donated by one of the men in the community. Upon its completion in 1954 the dormitory opened with some one hundred Navajo children as boarders. Of the new employees, which included a director, several aides, maintenance personnel and cooks, about half were Indians from the surrounding area.

That same fall the Bureau of Indian Affairs contracted with the Ramah schools for the education of the one hundred Navajo students. This was the first time that there had been any substantial number of Indian children in the Ramah school system. Prior to this, only a few Navajo youngsters who lived in the immediate vicinity of the community had attended classes in town. For the most part, those who received any formal schooling at all had gone either to the Day School -- facilities constructed by the BIA in 1946 about thirteen miles southeast of Ramah for the purpose of providing a basic elementary education for local Navajo children -- or to BIA or mission schools located in other more remote areas. Within ten years the terms of the original contract were expanded to include two hundred

Navajo students in the Ramah schools. Overcrowding occurred in both the dormitory and the schools, however, and a perpetual limit of one hundred and fifty was established.

In the early 1950's the additional opportunities afforded by opening the Ramah dormitory and school to the Navajos began to produce a dramatic effect on Navajo literacy rates and educational levels. The latter, in turn, resulted in additional economic benefits. Better equipped for industrial jobs, young Indians began to migrate to "the city" and better employment opportunities.

From a demographic perspective, Kluckhohn[38/] and Morgan[29/] have defined the principal characteristics of this period in Ramah Navajo history as the fragmentation of original family groups or outfits.[30/] This fragmentation resulted primarily from the death of heads of outfits and also from the dispersion of sibling groups.

> This dispersion has come about through marriage, increased opportunities for wage work, education, and travel. [31/]

Increasing population also placed a growing burden on community resources. While this "fragmentation" phenomenon tended to redefine the structure of individual family

groups by diminishing the number of members in each unit and creating new leadership, it should not be interpreted as a disintegration of local social life. In many ways, this process was simply one expression of a broadening sense of inter-relatedness, as the Ramah Navajos began to place less emphasis on traditional kinship ties and devote more attention to their existence as a unique, functioning community.

During the 1950's and early 1960's the Ramah Navajos became more deeply involved in the life of Ramah village itself as well as in the large Gallup and Grants communities. Also, influenced by the government, missionaries, travelers, anthropologists, and teachers, they began to broaden their interests beyond the confines of their immediate area. This budding secularism or incipient cosmopolitanism was prompted by additional factors such as education, travel, new occupational opportunities, and the overall development of the Ramah area.

In 1963 census records of the Ramah Navajos were transferred from the United Pueblos Agency in Albuquerque to the Navajo Agency headquarters at Window Rock, Arizona.

The move was a critical one, for with the establishment of a "Ramah Chapter Community Census" came other benefits, such as participation in special Navajo programs and work projects.

The year 1967 saw the construction of a new and modern Chapter House near the Day School some thirteen miles southeast of Ramah. Since 1950 the Ramah Chapter had used a large hogan in this same vicinity to house community political events, but new programs and broader concerns demanded more adequate facilities. Built by the tribe, the unit included an auditorium, a clinic, and a kitchen; and because of its general utility and regular schedule of activities, the new Chapter House became very popular as a place for members of the Navajo community to gather for their frequent social, political, or other meetings and events.

In 1968 Ramah High School, because of low enrollment and inadequate science and library facilities, was closed by the state of New Mexico. Navajo parents were forced to have their children bussed to Zuni High School, to send them to boarding schools in other areas, or simply to keep them at home. During the following year, Ramah was the

scene of several incidents centered about the problem of education.

Navajo parents, represented by the DNA (an organization funded by the Justice Department and which serves the Navajo people with legal aid services), filed suit against the state of New Mexico to force re-opening of the Ramah school. They also pressured the government to provide additional dormitories closer to the homes of the Navajo children than the present Ramah facilities. Although these efforts failed to gain the expected results, in 1969 the District Court ruled that county schools must furnish transportation for all students living within county boundaries, including those Navajo children living in areas remote from the main highways.

In general, this phase in Ramah Navajo history was characterized by the definition of the group's role within the structure of Navajo Tribal political life at large. Along with increased tribal participation came greater attention from, and rapport with, government agencies, a new involvement in the village activities of Ramah, and a stronger sense of unity as a distinct political entity.

Again, additional education, mobility, and economic opportunities manifested clear trends towards modernization.

Phase 4:
A New Sense of Community (1970 - ?)

te in 1969, a young DNA lawyer working in the Ramah area took it upon himself to organize an all-Indian school board and to solicit funds from various private and government agencies for the creation of a genuinely Navajo High School, to be operated by and for The People. After some ambitious negotiations, a total of $328,000 was obtained, the old high school building was leased from the town, and plans for the opening of the Ramah Navajo High School were well underway.

loosely organized summer-school program was engineered by the founding director in June, 1970, and in September the new high school began formal operation with approximately one hundred and thirty students, only twenty percent of whom were Anglo. A creative curriculum was instituted that included courses in Navajo Language and culture.

From the beginning of the school's program, local Anglo parents voiced complaints about the organization's

operation. They were unhappy about not being given a role in school affairs. The character and qualifications of the faculty also disturbed them, and many of the instructors, some of whom had been recruited from other professional backgrounds and other areas of the country, were labeled as "hippies" or "trouble-making Easterners." There was also a concern that the high school directorship was not adequately trained in professional education.

The fall of 1970 witnesses the continued polarization of the two groups: local Whites (mainly the Mormons) versus the Ramah Navajo High School. At the dedication of the remodeled facilities an event occurred which received wide publicity. A handful of local Anglos and an Albuquerque journalist alleged that several of the new high school teachers refused to stand during the pledge of allegiance. This, coupled with the contention that militancy and revolution were being taught in the high school, instigated a flurry of newspaper articles, editorials, letters, and a host of charges and counter-charges.

As the controversy raged, new charges were leveled by both the high school directors and the townspeople. The

former loudly denied each and every point in the Anglo attack and in turn accused local Whites of putting personal interests ahead of those of the community as a whole. Their opponents, with an ad hoc school board committee as spokesman, voiced additional charges concerning the inadequacies of the school program, the supposed discrimination against White students, and the alleged "puppet" or "rubber stamp" role of the Navajo school board itself. As antagonisms continued to broaden the communications gap, most of the White parents withdrew their children from the school and enrolled them at Zuni, leaving only a handful of White pupils in the school. With the removal of Anglo students, the Whites consoled themselves by assuming an affected sympathetic attitude toward the problems of the school and its enrollment, and polemics began to cool.

At this time, however, the State Board of Education stepped into the picture, demanding that the new high school meet their accreditation standards or face a severe penalty. In the first place, until the high school was officially accredited, it would not be eligible for any state aid or textbook assistance, nor could its athletic

teams complete with any other schools in the state. Again, as a final blow, if the school refused to cooperate, or was unable to meet minimum standards, the state threatened to take action against any parents continuing to send their children to the deficient institution. After weeks of investigation, discussion, and compromise, the state agreed, in January, 1971, to issue temporary accreditation, with the understanding that the school would do all possible to correct any existing problems.

The early months of 1971 saw the development of two significant events in the lives of the Ramah Navajos. In February one of the Navajo High School directors was elected to the county school board, and in April the Ramah Chapter petitioned the Navajo Tribal Council for official inclusion as a part of the reservation. Should the proposal become a reality, it would, while not affecting private lands, give the Ramah leadership added authority in dealing with law enforcement problems as well as a more direct access to tribal benefits.

Since the early days of settlement in the area many changes have occurred among the Ramah Navajos. Many now

live in conventional frame houses or conveniently modified hogans instead of the traditional style dwellings. In many ways they have been caught up in the twentieth-century wage economy, approximately twenty percent of the total work force being employed in regular non-agricultural jobs. Very few of The People in the area derive their entire support from ranching and farming income. Instead of horse-drawn wagons, most Navajo families now drive pick-up trucks or automobiles. More young people are getting college or special training. Some eighteen percent of Ramah Navajos now have high school diplomas, and better than seventy-five percent of the group are fairly fluent in English, although the language of The People is still used in most homes and at community gatherings. Traditional social obligations have become less restrictive. For example, marriage is no longer as closely supervised and controlled by parental authority as formerly, and more young married couples are establishing households independent of those of their parents.

Some of the most evident changes have been witnessed in the area of the Ramah People's political life. Many

Anglo-American methods in the organization and administration of power have been completely foreign to the traditional Navajo mind. For this reason, even by 1950, the political organization of the Ramah Navajos was still predicated on the mechanics of customary patterns of community interaction.

> Power has tended to be in the hands of older people who are still in full possession of their faculties, of the more wealthy, or singers. The exercise of power is seldom overt and direct but rather masked, oblique, and diffuse. Evident power, like evident wealth, is a cause of jealousy and an invitation either to attack by witches or to gossip that the holder is a witch. 32/

By 1970 Ramah Navajo politics had taken on new and expanded characteristics. Power was being exercised by the wealthy members of the community. The singers and the traditionally wise gradually had been passing away, and it was becoming easier to overlook and ignore these few voices from out of the past. Because of the strong influence of the church and increased educational achievement in the area, fear of witchcraft no longer served to restrain, at least to the extent it had earlier, the expedition of legislative activity and the exhibition of individual power.

For years, the two largest Ramah populations -- the Anglos and the Navajos -- have lived, in terms of major concerns and events, in two completely different worlds. While there were routine contacts between members of both societies in work, trading, or mission activities, the broader community experiences over the years manifested a radical separateness.

Still, the daily, casual interactions reinforced feelings of superiority on the one hand, and of resentment and hostility on the other. Because of political and economic realities, the Ramah Navajos, until recently, almost fatalistically resigned themselves to an inferior position.

Events in recent years, however, have begun to rearrange many of the habits ingrained by history. Common interest in area economic development, the new Navajo High School, and the increasing effectiveness of Indian political power, have all served to create a core of concern that has in turn realigned local power and has forced the two groups to operate as a single community. Despite the friction surrounding the issues, these events seem to portend a new and perhaps more viable unity in local affairs.

It is evident that the first months of this most recent phase in their history have seen a new awareness on the part of the Ramah Navajos as to their collecitve role as a viable political unity, both with reference to local and non-local problems. Still, many continue to be relatively unaffected by community concerns. One local leader has observed:

> A lot of people still don't understand what's going on. It's a problem of communication, I guess. But they still live like their family and their house was the whole world. Things happen, and they never seem to hear about it or come. It's getting better though.

While a comprehensive sense of common purpose is yet to be achieved in the area, it is obvious that the situation has improved immensely in recent decades. Events of the past few years make it evident that a significant political unification and new sense of community may well be a reality for the Ramah Navajos within the next few years.

1/ Clyde Kluckhohn, "The Ramah Navajo," Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 196 (1966):371.

2/ Tl'ohchini means "the place of the onions" and is used by the Navajos to refer to Ramah because of a particular strong-smelling plant that is common in the area directly around the town itself.

3/ Clyde Kluckhohn, To The Foot of The Rainbow (New York: Century, 1927).

4/ John L. Landgraf, "Land-use in the Ramah Area of New Mexico," Peabody Museum Papers, 42(1954)I:8-25.

5/ Paul A. Vestal, "Ethnobotany of the Ramah Navajo," Peabody Museum Papers, 40(1952)4:3.

6/ Landgraf, 23.

7/ Donald E. Worcester, "The Navaho During the Spanish regime in New Mexico,"New Mexico Historical Review. 26(1951)2:103.

8/ George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey, Expedition into New Mexico Made by Antonio de Espejo, 1582-1583, as Revealed in the Journal of Diego Perez de Luxan, a Member of the Party (Los Angeles: The Quivira Society, 1929).

9/ M. A. Stokes and T. L. Smiley, "Tree-Ring Dates from the Navajo Land Claim. III. The Southern Sector," Tree-Ring Bulletin, 27(1966)3-4:9-10.

10/ Clyde Kluckhohn, "Aspects of the Demographic History of a Small Population," Estudios Anthropologios, ed. Juan Comas (Mexico City, 1956):359.

11/ John P. Harrington, "Southern Peripheral Athapaskan Origins, Divisions and Migrations," Smithsonian Institute Miscellaneous Collections, 100(1940):515.

12/ Ramah Files (September 2, 1943), Statement to McCarron Committee.

13/ Navajo Plaintiff's Exhibits 3047 through 3068A, Docket 229 (Navajo) before the Indian Claims Commission.

14/ Decision of the Indian Claims Commission, June 29, 1970, in Docket 229,(Navajo Land Claim.

15/ Clyde Kluckhohn, Ramah Files (June 21, 1943).

16/ Kluckhohn, 1956:363-364.

17/ Kluckhohn, 1966:347; Franciscan Fathers, An Ethnologic Dictionary of the Navajo Language, (St. Michael's Press, St. Michaels, Arizona, 1968 ed.), 334-335.

18/ Landgraf, 1954:28.

19/ "Son of Former Many Beads, "The Ramah Navajos, trans.. Robert W. Young (Navaho Historical Series,1949), 1:4.

20/ Ibid.

21/ Ibid., 6.

22/ Kluckhohn, Ramah Files (June 21, 1943).

23/ Kenneth Morgan, "A Genetic Demography of a Small Navajo Community" (unpublished PhD dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Michigan, 1968), 37.

24/ Kluckhohn, Ramah Files (September 8, 1947.

25/ Kluckhohn,1966:335.

26/ Landgraf, 31-32.

27/ "Son of Former Many Beads," 16.

28/ Kluckhohn, 1956:57.

29/ Morgan, 39.

30/ The "outfit" is defined as "...including a married couple, their married children, and their married grandchildren." Ibid.

31/ Ibid.

32/ Kluckhohn, 1966:369.

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